a little book on the wto
brought to you by the

self-organise antagonise

THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION IS COMING TO SYDNEY. 14-15 NOVEMBER 2002.

On 14th - 15th November 2002 the World Trade Organisation [WTO] is coming to Sydney for a mini-ministerial meeting. This will be a meeting of 25 trade ministers, to discuss ways to further their neo-liberal and corporate agenda. Previous mini-ministerial meetings in Singapore and Mexico were crucial in the lead up to the Doha Round WTO negotiations last year.

This little booklet will let you know a bit more about the WTO and endless acronyms like GATS, TRIPS, IMF and the effects that these institutions and trade agreements have on our world. We've also provided some tools to assist you in taking action, whether it's in Sydney, Melbourne, or your own town. We've focussed on non-hierarchical and autonomous organising techniques with a respect for a diversity of tactics. This focus has drawn inspiration from previous mobilisations such as Woomera 2002 and S11 in Melbourne in 2000.

:: it's a global movement
:: get involved!

Colonising Your Life and the World. At first the WTO may seem a bit irrelevant to your life and the things you care about. But when you look a bit closer you see that the WTO actually affects nearly every aspect of our lives and those of people all around the world. Whether it's access to a quality publicly funded education; clean, safe drinking water; increased logging and environmental destruction; access to affordable medicines; decent wages and conditions at work; genetically modified foods; the patenting of life forms and indigenous people's knowledge, WTO policies currently effect all these areas and more. WTO meetings like the one in Sydney are about furthering the reach of the WTO and increasing the profits for corporations at the cost of people and the planet.

:: act :: create :: resist
:: link up :: antagonise

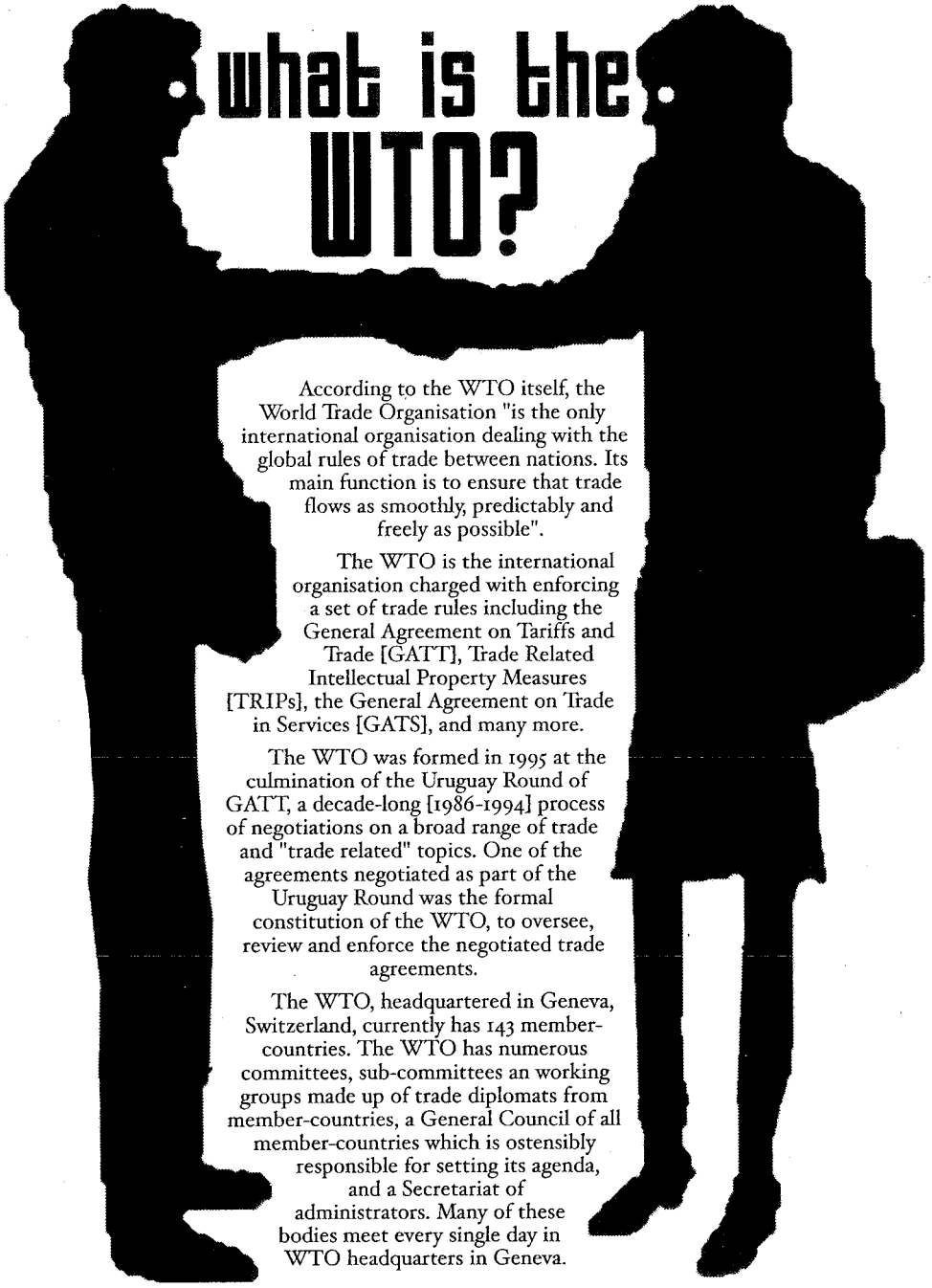
In addition to education, we hope to inspire you to take action, and provide some tools to help you do it. All around the globe people are rising up against the WTO and global capitalism. From the revolts in Argentina, the hundreds of thousands in Genoa and Barcelona, to the peasant land occupations in Brazil, resistance continues to grow despite the post 9/11 hysteria. There's no one single demand for these protests, rather there is an array of demands reflecting different interests and struggles.

Whether you are planning to be a part of the big mobilisations in Sydney; or you want to take action in your locale or workplace, by linking up with people to take action we can organise to resist. Certainly, the WTO has immense power over the lives of ordinary people, as do nation states and corporations. But the WTO's power is bound up in capitalism, and our labour is essential to capitalism. Our labour creates capital and profit, without which capitalism cannot function. Our labour is therefore essential to capitalism, this applies whether you are a casual doing tele-marketing, a woman in a sweatshop, unemployed or someone doing unpaid domestic labour or working in a factory.

When working people, students, and communities refuse, and say enough, that defiance has the potential to change the entire system.

***Antagonise5* is part of, but does not represent, the melb no2wto network.**

the melbourne no2wto network meets mondays, 7pm,



what is the WTO?

According to the WTO itself, the World Trade Organisation "is the only international organisation dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible".

The WTO is the international organisation charged with enforcing a set of trade rules including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT], Trade Related Intellectual Property Measures [TRIPs], the General Agreement on Trade in Services [GATS], and many more.

The WTO was formed in 1995 at the culmination of the Uruguay Round of GATT, a decade-long [1986-1994] process of negotiations on a broad range of trade and "trade related" topics. One of the agreements negotiated as part of the Uruguay Round was the formal constitution of the WTO, to oversee, review and enforce the negotiated trade agreements.

The WTO, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, currently has 143 member-countries. The WTO has numerous committees, sub-committees an working groups made up of trade diplomats from member-countries, a General Council of all member-countries which is ostensibly responsible for setting its agenda, and a Secretariat of administrators. Many of these bodies meet every single day in WTO headquarters in Geneva.

seven reasons to hate the WTO

1 The WTO tramples over labour and human rights

The WTO has refused to address the impact of free trade on labour rights, despite the fact that countries that actively enforce labour rights are disadvantaged by countries that consistently violate international labour conventions. Many developing countries, such as Mexico, contend that labour standards constitute a 'barrier to free trade' for countries whose competitive advantage in the global economy is cheap labour. Potential solutions to labour and human rights abuses are blocked by the WTO, which has ruled that it is [1] illegal for a government to ban a product based on the way it is produced [i.e. with child labour] and [2] government cannot take into account 'non commercial values' such as human rights and the behaviour of companies that do business with vicious dictatorships such as Burma when making purchasing decisions.

2 The WTO is destroying the environment

The WTO is being used by corporations to dismantle hard-won environmental protections, which are attacked as "barriers to trade". In 1993 the very first WTO panel ruled that a provision of the US Clean Air Act, requiring both domestic and foreign producers alike to produce cleaner gasoline, was illegal. Recently, the WTO declared illegal a provision of the Endangered Species Act that requires shrimp sold in the US to be caught with an inexpensive device allowing endangered sea turtles to escape. The WTO is currently negotiating an agreement that would eliminate tariffs on wood products, thus increasing the demand for timber and escalating deforestation.

3 The WTO is killing people

The WTO's fierce defense of intellectual property rights- patents, copyrights and trademarks- comes at the expense of health and human lives. The organisation's support for pharmaceutical companies against governments seeking to protect their people's health has had serious implications for places like sub-Saharan Africa, where 80 percent of the world's new AIDS cases are found. The US government, on behalf of US drug companies, is trying to block developing countries' access to less expensive life-saving drugs. For example, the South African government has been threatened with a WTO challenge over proposed national health laws that would encourage the use of generic drugs, ban the practice of manufacturers offering economic incentives to doctors who prescribe their products and institute "parallel importing", which allows companies to import drugs from other countries where the drugs are cheaper.

4 The WTO undermines local development and penalises poor countries

The WTO's "most favoured nation" provision requires all WTO member countries to treat each other equally and to treat all corporations from these countries equally regardless of their track record. Policies aimed at preferencing local residents, using local materials, or adopting environmentally sound practices are essentially illegal under the WTO. Under the WTO rules, developing countries are prohibited from following the same polices that developed countries pursued, such as protecting nascent, domestic industries until they can be internationally competitive.

5 The WTO is increases inequity

The empty rhetoric of 'free trade' is not working for the majority of the world. During the most recent period of rapid growth in global trade and investment inequality worsened both internationally and within countries. The UN Development Program reports that the richest 20 percent of the world's population consume 86 percent of the world's resources while the poorest 80 percent consume just 14 percent. WTO rules have hastened these trends by opening up countries to foreign investment and thereby making it easier for production to go where the labour is cheapest and most easily exploited and environmental costs are low. Companies cut wages and jobs in developed countries, saying they must in order to be "globally competitive."

6 The WTO is a stacked court

The WTO's dispute panels, which rule on whether domestic laws are "barriers to trade" and should therefore be abolished, consist of three trade bureaucrats who are not screened for conflict of interest. For example, in the tuna/dolphin case that Mexico filed against the US (which forced the US to repeal its law that barred tuna from being caught by mile-long nets that kill hundreds of thousands of dolphins each year), one judge was from a corporate front group that lobbied on behalf of the Mexican government for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

7 The tide is turning against the WTO!

Since Seattle millions of people around the world have turned up in waves of protests at various IMF, World Bank, G8 and WTO meetings. There is a growing international backlash the neo-liberal agenda that these organisations promote and enforce. Protests against the WTO, World Bank and IMF are closely tied to the protests that go on everyday, in your city, even your street. Sometimes protests will be big but often they will be smaller and less glamourous, call centre workers getting organised to demand better wages and conditions, outworkers seeking fair wages, a lone worker attempting to stop being bullied or sexually harassed by their boss. And that really is only the beginning, take a look around, people are protesting - resisting - and creating alternatives to capitalism all around.

gats

General Agreement on Trade in Services.

GATS is the General Agreement on Trade in Services, one of the many agreements negotiated by the member governments of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). GATS aims to 'liberalise' services – anything from local laws, water provision, telecommunications, postal services, education, health services and much more. This means removing barriers to trade (such as laws which protect the environment and workers' rights) and increasing multinational corporations ability to profit from the service industry. In the case of GATS, it also means allowing corporations to compete with government services, such as schools, for the right to government funding. GATS could see further privatisation of public services, including health, education and water provision.

GATS was signed in '94 (by the predecessor to the WTO, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), but the agreement is constantly being expanded through on-going rounds of negotiations. Governments have already agreed that each round of GATS negotiations will lead to "a progressively higher level of liberalisation."

GATS and privatisation

Privatisation turns the aim of a service from looking after the needs of the community to making a profit.

If you ask the Australian government if GATS could lead to privatisation of the health system, you will be assured that government services are exempted from GATS, under article 1(3)(b). However government services are defined as services supplied by the government neither on a commercial basis nor in competition with other suppliers.

However, the wording of this exclusion is ambiguous and unclear. If a service supplied by the government (for example government-run schools) is also provided by a commercial supplier (such as privately-funded schools) the government could then be deemed to be in competition with the private sector. Not many government services meet the GATS definition of a government service, so not many government services are exempted from the agreement.

But, you will be assured, governments choose which services they want liberalised under GATS, and as yet the Australian government has not listed health, education or water. However the GATS agreement explicitly aims to increase liberalisation, meaning that even if these services are safe now, they are not in the future.

In addition, there are moves to apply 'national treatment' (which currently only applies to listed services) to all services. This would mean that a government funding its own public sector, including schools and healthcare, would be seen as discriminating against foreign corporations providing similar services but not receiving the same funding. This would lead to privatisation.

(But be warned, even without WTO agreements, the Australian government has a bad habit of privatising services. In fact, the Australian governement is a leader in this.)

Water

GATS could see the privatisation of water provision. Water provision is already being privatised around the world by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Under pressure from the IMF, the Bolivian government privatise water in the city of Cochabamba. Water bills quickly shot up to one third of some people's incomes, and collecting rain water was banned. People first refused to pay, then took to the streets in massive protests which brought the city to a standstill. In the end, after police violence, the people won and control of water was put back in public hands. Under GATS it is much harder to turn back, meaning that future governments will have their hands tied.

The MAI

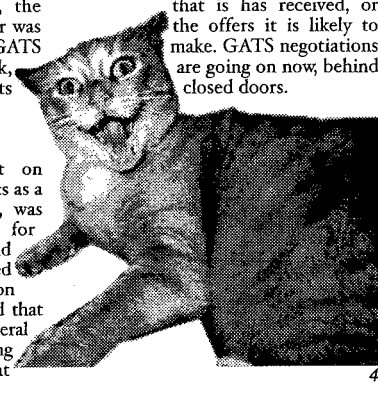
The Multilateral Agreement on Investment, described by its critics as a 'bill of rights for corporations', was proposed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1997, and defeated by massive community opposition in 1998. The WTO has admitted that GATS is the world's first multilateral investment agreement - meaning the MAI is back, with a different name.

People around the world objected to the MAI because it allowed corporations to sue governments, it was negotiated in secret, it was virtually irreversible, and it aimed to take away governments' ability to control corporations investing in their country. GATS includes all of these problems except the first.

While corporations can bring benefits for a few, lack of any local control means that the conditions under which corporations invest and in which areas in are not subject to any democratic accountability. Preferencing local industries can be an important way for Southern ('third world') countries to overcome poverty, and was an important part of East Asian economies' development. It is very hard for countries to foster local industries and lift themselves out of poverty when they have to compete with massive corporations in the same area.

What's happening now?

The current round of negotiations is known as 'GATS 2000'. As part of this round, WTO member countries, including Australia, have sent out their initial 'requests' of services they want other countries to privatise. WTO members countries now have until March 2003 to make their initial 'offers' back; following the offers deadline there will be a period of negotiation with the view to having this latest round finalised by January 1st, 2005. The Australian government, like many other countries, hasn't released full details of the the requests that is has received, or the offers it is likely to make. GATS negotiations are going on now, behind closed doors.



THE WTO & ENVIRONMENT

In the drive for economic growth, the WTO puts profits before...well just about everything. The WTO would argue that it supports sustainability, but in practice it only supports sustainability when it doesn't get in the way of corporate profits. The WTO has been following a neoliberal agenda, which is not just a set of rules, but a whole way of seeing the world.

Under the WTO, regulations protecting the environment are increasingly being labelled as 'barriers to trade'. WTO agreements, including the General Agreement on Trade in Services, allow governments to create regulations protecting the environment (and other regulations in the public interest) as long as the regulations aren't 'unnecessary' barriers to trade. With no definition of 'unnecessary' any environmental or other regulation risks being taken to the WTO court, the Dispute Settlement Body. The Dispute Settlement Body has rarely ruled in favour of environmental regulations, and the threat of being taken to court discourages countries from even thinking of enacting legislation aimed at protecting people and the environment.

If the Dispute Settlement Body finds that a country has indeed broken a WTO agreement by having an unnecessary barrier to trade, that country can have economic sanctions imposed on it. This makes WTO agreements far more enforceable than international environment agreements like the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention to Combat Desertification, or the Biodiversity Convention. The WTO is currently debating how WTO agreements and these 'multilateral environment agreements' fit together. A number of powerful governments are arguing that trade agreements should override environment agreements.

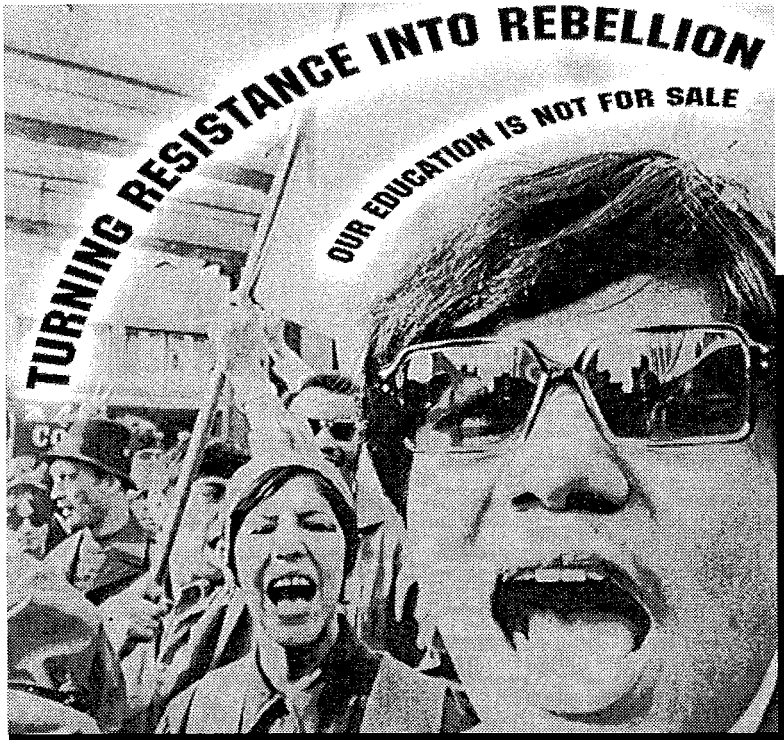
Environmental regulations around the world are also being eroded by the increasing mobility of multinational corporations. Many Southern ('third world') countries, desperately in need of foreign investment to pay the interest on their World Bank and IMF loans, are lowering their environmental standards in order to encourage corporations to invest in their countries. Corporations are likely to set up where the most lax laws regulating environmental and social justice standards.

THE WTO &FORESTS

The WTO is accelerating industrial logging for export, concentrating corporate control over forest resources, and reducing protections for forest ecosystems and forest peoples. Inevitably, such an agenda will increase species extinction, climate instability and fresh water scarcity. Countries can be in breach of WTO rules if they discriminate on imports based on how a product is produced. As a result, unsustainably logged timber can undercut the price of more sustainably logged timber. The WTO is also making it hard to limit the introduction of invasive species, or ensure that timber has labels specifying its environmental credentials. Under the WTO, industrial agriculture has intensified. Expanding export markets encourage landholders to clear forests to make space for monoculture crops. Forests are also cleared for the production of cash crops such as coffee and flowers. Cash crops are needed to gain foreign currency to pay back IMF and World Bank loans, and to compete in a globalised market.

WTO and Biotech

Multinational biotechnology corporations have a record of strong influence in the WTO. Speaking about the TRIPS agreement, a Monsanto spokesperson once stated: "Industry has identified a major problem in international trade. It crafted a solution, reduced it to a concrete proposal and sold it to our own and other governments...The industries and traders of world commerce have played simultaneously the role of patients, the diagnosticians and the physicians." The biotechnology industry has profited from patenting indigenous knowledge through the TRIPS agreement, while the US government has threatened to challenge the European Union's regulation of genetically modified foods as an illegal trade barrier. Through the WTO court, un-elected trade panels could declare that governments can't adequately label or block the import of genetically modified foods.



Crippling study fees, budget cuts, deregulation, privatisation, no student input, education for vocational purposes only... In Australia and across the globe education is changing rapidly. We desire a complete rethinking of education policy. We reject the neo-liberal changes to education that are being advanced by both the Federal Government and World Trade Organisation.

The current assault on education is global. It is based upon the ideals of corporatism, privatisation and the roll-back of community & welfare provisions (known as neo-liberalism), and is being pushed internationally by both countries such as the USA, Australia and Britain, and international organisations such as the WTO. The WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services [GATS] continues and intensifies the neo-liberal agenda in education which is currently being pursued here ruthlessly & relentlessly by the Federal Government.

Education in Australia has been suffering a death by a thousand cuts since the rise of neo-liberal ideology in the 1980's. Already in crisis, our education now faces a massive attack in the form of another government "review". This review unashamedly promotes huge increases in student fees, staff casualisation, course cuts and the dismantling of staff unions. We cannot allow our education to become a commodity we are forced to purchase to obtain a livable income.

As the global assault on education increases and intensifies so too does our resistance: We have sprayed the 'University of Nike' crudely over the entrance to a university in France with a sign next to it pointing to the 'Bill Gates' building. We have disrupted a senate meeting in Italy. We have taken to the streets in Spain with mass student rallies. We were pepper sprayed at demonstrations against the review in Perth, and hundreds of students in the sleepy town of Adelaide hurled placards at John Howard. In Queensland we stopped University senate meetings from implementing up-front fees and at Sydney Uni we stopped traffic.

At the WTO Sydney Ministerial Meeting on November 14-15 we will add our voices to the millions of students, teachers and concerned community members world-wide who are insisting that our education is not for sale.

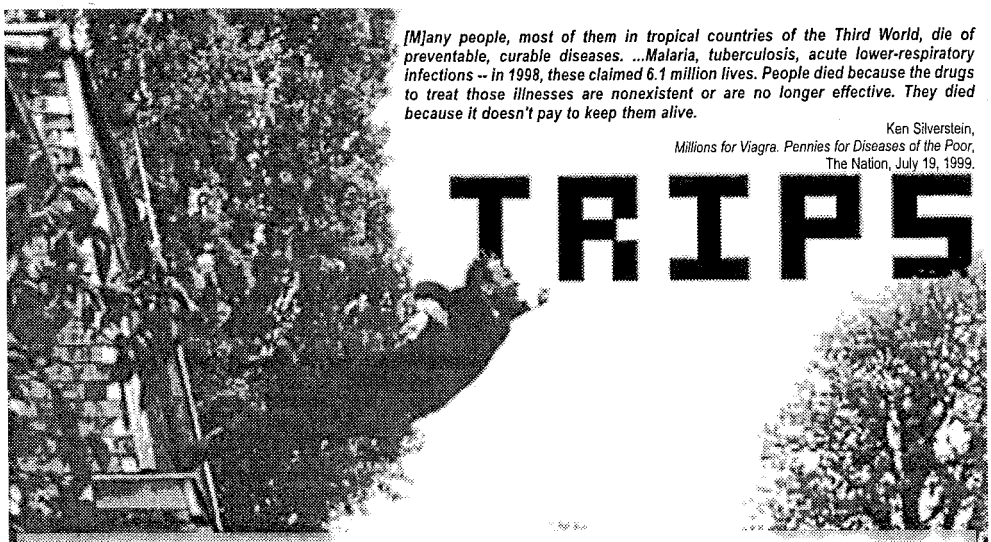
We will participate in diverse and creative actions to demonstrate our resistance to an economic system that creates a commodified + corporatised education.

We will make our resistance a reflection of the world we wish to create - democratic, participatory, exciting and liberating.

We come together as people who will fight the concerted assault of the global elite to rob us of a decent publicly funded education, to introduce full fee student loans, make degrees purely vocational, turn our universities into factories of the mind where students are churned out to work as obedient automatons in the 'dark satanic mills' of the future.

Our action will be one of many actions and protests that are planned for the WTO Sydney mini-ministerial meeting protests this November. Direct actions, festivals, workshops, marches, music, where the borders of creativity are the only barriers.

for convergence details or more info:
education@nus.asn.au or 0413 041 083
www.nowto.cat.org.au



[M]any people, most of them in tropical countries of the Third World, die of preventable, curable diseases. ...Malaria, tuberculosis, acute lower-respiratory infections -- in 1998, these claimed 6.1 million lives. People died because the drugs to treat those illnesses are nonexistent or are no longer effective. They died because it doesn't pay to keep them alive.

Ken Silverstein,
Millions for Viagra. Pennies for Diseases of the Poor,
The Nation, July 19, 1999.

TRIPS

TRIPS [or Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights] exists to protect the 'intellectual property' and hence profits, of multi national corporations. It is designed to prevent countries or individuals making cheaper, more accessible versions of products that are already 'owned' by corporations.

DRUG Patents:

The combined worth of the world's top five drug companies is twice the combined GDP of all sub-Saharan Africa.

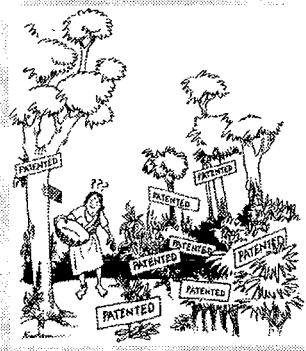
As the ancient scourge of polio was rolled back by his vaccine 50 years ago, its inventor Jonas Salk was asked why he never took a patent out on the medicine – a patent that would have made him wildly rich. "There is no patent," he replied. "Could you patent the sun?"

Unlike Salks today's drug companies patent drugs, often developed through publicly funded medical research. Last year public outrage and protest forced the US to drop its WTO action against the Brazilian Government, aimed at preventing them from developing cheap generic HIV drugs. Similar action was taken, then dropped, against the South African Government. This is despite the fact that 11 million Africans have already died from AIDS, and drugs are available which can prevent the transmission of HIV from a pregnant mother to her unborn child.

Another patent causing outrage has been a remedy for diabetes involving eggplant, bitter gourd and jamun, the fruit of the rose apple tree extract. It has been common knowledge in India for centuries, yet again there is an attempt to patent it.

Patents on Life and food security:

Furthermore, indigenous knowledge that has been around for hundreds, if not thousands of years, have been patented by large companies, without consent or prior knowledge from indigenous communities. People then find that they have to "buy" back that which they had already known and used freely. Large transnational corporations like Monsanto, DuPont and others have been investing in biotechnology in such a way that patents have been taken out on indigenous plants which have been used for generations by the local people, without their knowledge or consent. The people then find that the only way to use their age-old knowledge is to buy them back from the big corporations. In Brazil, which has some of the richest biodiversity in the world, large multinational corporations have already patented more than half the known plant species.



Another company has already patented the blood cells of Amazonian Indians, and another holds a monopoly on the genetic code of the Icelandic population.

Further, TRIPS prevents impoverished countries from developing existing technologies for themselves, rather than relying on imports. There is already a wide technological gap between rich and poor countries. Although developing countries are rich in informal knowledge, they are net importers of the kinds of high-tech goods and know-how protected by TRIPS. Industrialised countries, on the other hand, account for 90 per cent of global research and development (R&D) spending, an even higher share of patents, and are the main exporters of IP.

TRIPS will exacerbate this divide by increasing the cost of knowledge-rich goods imported by developing countries and preventing the creation of alternatives. Royalties and licence fees paid by developing countries to patent holders in the industrialised world have been climbing rapidly since the mid-1980s. In 1998, the US received a net surplus of more than US$23bn from its IP exports.

Corporate patents are not an endevour towards "free trade," they are exactly the opposite. They give corporations monopolies over the production and re-production of resources that are essential to life. They further the enclosure of the commons, the privatisation of what should be owned by all.

The WTO is a great producer of "economic migration", enabling corporations to travel the world, in search of the best conditions for profits - lower wages, reduced environmental standards and the denial of human rights.

Yet people who flee poverty, war and the enclosure of communal lands throughout the world are made illegal - locked in camps and deprived of their freedom to move.

We are gathering to express our resistance to an economic system that creates unwilling migrants forced to leave everything behind in the hope of a new life.

◆ In Afghanistan more people are dying today through poverty or US bombs than died at the hands of the Taliban.

◆ In Pakistan and Iran millions live permanently in desperate conditions in refugee camps.

◆ Throughout the world Nike pays as little as $2 a day.

◆ Over ten million people have been displaced by World Bank funded dam projects.

In the face of injustices like these, people worldwide have expressed their determination to build a future that values people over profits and to create meaningful futures for themselves and their communities beyond bare existence and a desire for dignity.

The global movement of people reasserts this autonomy and challenges the control of capital and the nation state. However governments and the WTO have continued to promote a system that privileges the movement of capital over the sustainability of communities and the environment.

"Border protection" forces people to stay and work for whatever capital is offering. The construction of the "nation" as under assault from "illegals" intensifies the racism against all migrants. The removal of their rights to work, social security, and education, is the concrete manifestation of the ordering of the "white nation".

The "mini-ministerial" of WTO trade ministers to be held in Sydney in November will be a further means of promoting the corporate agenda.

We will not stand by while the racism and xenophobia unleashed by governments divides communities and weakens our resistance to policies like those promoted by the WTO.

We call on everyone to participate in a carnival of resistance in the lead up to the Ministerial. On Wednesday evening, before we converge on the WTO Ministerial, help us to express our creative resistance to capital's globalisation, and our desires for a world where everyone is free to move and free to stay.

Bring drums, streamers, instruments, yourselves and your friends to reclaim the streets of Sydney in a manifestation of our own visions of globalisation. This action will be one of many on Wednesday night. We encourage others to issue calls to action and participate in their own way.

5pm Sydney Town Hall
Wednesday, November 13, 2002

:: freedom to move :: freedom to stay
: : move against racism::

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nooneisillegal@netscape.net
no borders (sydney)
no_borders@graffiti.net

IT DIDN'T START IN SEATTLE.

"This 'new movement', portrayed by the media as students and anarchists from the rich and prosperous global north, is just the tip of the iceberg. In the global south, a far deeper and wide-ranging movement has been developing for years, largely ignored by the media."

Jessica Woodroffe &
Mark Ellis-Jones,
'States of unrest: Resistance to IMF policies in poor countries'

Some mainstream media representation may leave the impression that the recent public protests in Seattle, Genoa and other western cities are recent issues, or that these are the only protests, and that only a few are protesting.

Before and since Seattle, millions of people around the world have turned up in waves of protests at various IMF, World Bank, WEF, WTO meetings and the implementation these of organisations policies. Protests against the WTO, World Bank and IMF are closely tied to the protests that go on everyday, in your city, even your street.

Sometimes protests will be big but often they will be smaller and less glamourous; call centre workers getting organised to demand better conditions, outworkers seeking fair wages, communities resisting gentrification, a lone worker attempting to stop being bullied or sexually harassed by the boss. And that really is only the beginning, take a look around, people are protesting, resisting and creating alternatives to capitalism all around.

Argentina

June 2000: Over 7.2 million workers support a 24 hour general strike in defiance of the new IMF-prescribed labour laws.

July/August 2001: 100,000 people protest at further IMF-related measures that would lead to large pay cuts.

December 2001: Two days of protests at further austerity measures and an economic meltdown bring down the government. 16 people are killed and the country sees 5 Presidents in one month. Resistance is ongoing.

Australia

September 11 2000: Over 15,000 people took to the streets of Melbourne to protest against the World Economic Forum at the Crown Casino

March 2002: Thousands of people descended on the Australian Government's concentration camp at Woomera in the Australian Desert. 50 detainees escape and eleven remain free.

Brazil

January 2001: Coinciding with the annual World Economic Forum meetings in Davos, Switzerland, 10,000 people gather in Porto Alegre, Brazil for the 1st World Social Forum. People discuss alternatives to the current forms of corporate globalisation. February 2002 saw even more gather for the 2nd World Social Forum, with some 50,000 people attending.

GLOBAL RESISTANCE

IT WON'T END IN SYDNEY.

Ecuador

Marches at the beginning of 2000, saw over 40,000 indigenous people protesting US and IMF-prescribed reforms (resulting in 35,000 military personnel and police being deployed).

February 2001: a state of emergency was declared amidst an enormous indigenous uprising that briefly topples the government. People demand an end to violence and a repeal of IMF economic policies which have brought the country to the brink of destruction.

USA

November 30 1999: 50,000 people gather to shut down the World Trade Organisation ministerial in Seattle, scuttling negotiations for a new round of trade talks.

Venezuela

February 27 1989: structural changes imposed by the IMF were followed by a popular uprising (the caracazo), but was put down with 4,000 dead.

India

December 2000: More than a million electricity workers protested for a day against a proposed bill that follows "World Bank prescriptions" to privatize the power sector in India.

July 2001: Ten million state employees go on general strike against privatisation plans and call for a halt to IMF, World Bank and WTO policies.

Italy

July 2001: The G8 Summit in Genoa sees close to 300,000 protestors take to the streets. One demonstrator is killed by violent police crackdown.

March 23 2002: Some 2 million protested in Rome for what was initially a labor-based protest but grows to include a protest against political violence as well.

Mexico

January 1 1994: The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) rise up in Chiapas on the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) goes into effect. Fighting for their indigenous right to communal lands they resist the global war of neoliberalism.

March 2001: 200,000 people gather in Mexico City, along with the Zapatista commanders, to demand "peace, justice and dignity".

Papua New Guinea

June 2001: A week long protest in against IMF/World Bank austerity measures sees 3 students killed and 13 injured on campus by police and military.

South Korea

May and June 2001: 50,000 people protest against restructuring plans encouraged by the IMF.

Spain

March 16 2002: 500,000 people protest in Barcelona at the European Union meeting and against a "Europe of capital and war".

AROUND THE WORLD

AFTER GENOA

WHY WE NEED TO STAY IN THE STREETS.

By Starhawk

Since Genoa, there has been lots of healthy debate about where the movement needs to go. The large scale protests are becoming more dangerous and difficult. The summits are moving to inaccessible locations. The IMF and the World Bank and the G8 and the WTO continue to do their business. Are we being effective enough to justify the risks we're taking? Should we be focusing more on local work, building our day-to-day networking and organizing? I was in Genoa. Because of what I experienced there, including the moments of real terror and horror, I am more convinced than ever that we need to stay in the streets. We need to continue mounting large actions, contesting summits, working on the global scale.

Our large scale actions have been extraordinarily effective. I've heard despairing counsels that the protests have not affected the debates in the G8 or the WTO or the IMF/World Bank. In fact they have, they have significantly changed the agendas and the propaganda issuing forth. In any case, the actual policies of these institutions will be the last thing to change. But for most of us on the streets, changing the debate within these institutions is not our purpose. Our purpose is to undercut their legitimacy, to point a spotlight at their programs and policies, and to raise the social costs of their existence until they become insupportable. Contesting the summits has delegitimized these institutions in a way no local organizing possibly can. The big summit meetings are elaborate rituals, ostentatious shows of power that reinforce the entitlement and authority of the bodies they represent. When those bodies are forced to meet behind walls, to fight a pitched battle over every conference, to retreat to isolated locations, the ritual is interrupted and their legitimacy is undercut. The agreements that were being negotiated in secret are brought out into the spotlight of public scrutiny. The lie that globalization means democracy is exposed; and the mask of benevolence is ripped off.

Local organizing simply can't do this as effectively as the big demonstrations. Local organizing is vital, and there are other things it does do: outreach, education, movement building, the creation of viable alternatives, the amelioration of some of the immediate effects of global policy. We can't and won't abandon the local, and in fact never have: many of us

work on both scales. No one can go to every summit: we all need to root ourselves in work in our own communities. But many of us have come to the larger, global actions because we understand that the trade agreements and institutions we contest are designed to undo all of our local work and override the decisions and aspirations of local communities.

We can make it a conscious goal of every large scale action to strengthen local networks and support local organizing. Aside from Washington DC, Brussels, or Geneva, which have no choice, no city is ever going to host one of these international meetings twice. Even now, we hear rumors that Washington is considering relocating or limiting the upcoming IMF/World Bank meeting. But if we find ways to organize mass actions that leave resources and functioning coalitions behind, then each grand action can strengthen and support the local work that continues on a daily basis.

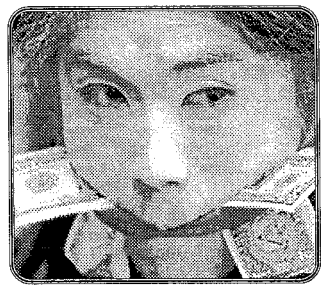
Summits won't remain the nice, juicy, targets that they are for long. Over the last two years, we've reaped an agenda of meetings that were set and contracted for before Seattle. Now that they are locating the meetings in ever more obscure and isolated venues, we need a strategy that can allow us to continue building momentum.

As an example, some of us have been talking about linked, large-scale regional actions targeting stock exchanges and financial institutions when the WTO meets in Qatar in November. The message we'll be sending is: "If you move the summits beyond our reach, and continue the policies of power consolidation and wealth concentration, then social unrest will spread beyond these specific institutions to challenge the whole structure of global corporate capitalism itself." Marches, teach-ins, countersummits, programs of positive alternatives alone can't pose this level

of threat to the power structure, but combined with direct action on the scale we've now reached, they can.

Of course, the more successful we are, the meaner they get. But when they use force against us, we still win, even though the victory comes at a high cost. Systems of power maintain themselves through our fear of the force they can command, but force is costly. They cannot sustain themselves if they have to actually use force in order to accomplish every normal function.

Genoa was a victory won at a terrible price. I hope never to undergo another night like I spent when they raided the IMC and the Diaz school, knowing that atrocities were being done just across the way and not being able to stop them. I ache and grieve and rage over the price. I would do almost anything to assure that no one, especially no young person, ever suffers



such brutality again. Almost anything. Anything except backing away from the struggle. Because that level of violence and brutality is being enacted, daily, all over the world. It's the shooting of four students in New Guinea, the closing of a school in Senegal, the work quota in a maquiladora on the Mexican border, the clearcutting of a forest in Oregon, the price of privatized water in Cochabamba. It's the violence being perpetrated on the bodies of youth, especially youth of color, in prisons all over the United States, and the brutality and murder going on in Colombia, Palestine, Venezuela and it's the utter disregard for the integrity of the ecosystems that sustain us all.

I don't see the choice as being between the danger of a large action and safety. I no longer see any place of safety. Or rather, I see that in the long run our safest course is to act strongly now. The choice is about when and

how we contest the powers that are attempting to close all political space for true dissent.

Genoa made clear that they will fight ruthlessly to defend the consolidation of their power, but we still have a broad space in which to organize and mount large actions. We need to defend that space by using it, filling and broadening it. Either we continue to fight them together now when we can mount large-scale, effective actions, or we fight them later in small, isolated groups, or alone when they break down the doors of our homes in the middle of the night. Either we wage this struggle when there are still living forests, running rivers, and resilience left in the life support systems of the planet, or we fight when the damage is even deeper and the hope of healing slim. We have many choices about how to wage the struggle. We can be more strategic, more creative, more skillful in what we do. We can learn to better prepare people for what they might face, and to better support people afterwards. We have deep questions to consider about violence and nonviolence, about our tactics and our long range vision, which I hope to address in a later posting.

But those choices remain only so long as we keep open the space in which to make them. We need to grow, not shrink. We need to explore and claim new political territory. We need the actions of this autumn to be bigger, wilder, more creatively outrageous and inspiring than ever, from the IMF/World Bank actions in Washington DC at the end of September to the many local and regional actions in November when the WTO meets in Quatar. We need to stay in the streets.

August, 2001

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

UNDER THE CONTROL OF POWERFUL STATES

The WTO is made up of 143 member countries. It is supposedly a consensus based organisation; that is, all countries have to agree to a decision before it is adopted by the WTO. This means, that the world's poorer countries, the majority world, should hold the balance of power in the WTO. The reality is vastly different. Four countries, known as the Quad, the United States, Europe, Japan and Canada steer the direction of the WTO.

Rich countries are able to control the WTO, and sideline majority world countries for a number of reasons. Firstly the rich countries hold economic and political sway in the global capitalist economic system. Their economies dominate and as such they are able to force through the decisions that are in their interests. Secondly the rich countries regularly threaten majority world countries. In the case of the Doha WTO meeting in 2001, rich countries threatened to cut aid budgets and change trade preferences if majority world countries didn't go along with their wishes. The Nigerian government issued a statement denouncing the draft Doha declaration before the meeting, and then was offered a large economic and military aid package. They then came out loudly in support of the declaration.

Thirdly majority world countries are often excluded from decision-making forums. This occurs formally through WTO processes, where the countries that will negotiate particular aspects of agreements are handpicked, one example is the 'Green Room' process. In addition, many majority world countries are excluded from WTO meetings and procedures because they can't afford to have officers based in Geneva, the home of the WTO.

States vs Popular interests

There is another big problem with the structure of the WTO, that is, nation states rarely, if ever, truly represent the wishes of 'the people'. The failure of parliamentary democracy is as relevant in Australia as it is in a country like Indonesia. National governments are far removed from the realities of people's daily lives.

When decisions are made at international institutions like the WTO, they are even further removed from the impacts of real people and communities.

This is one of the factors that has caused massive demonstrations around the globe, from 2 million people in Argentina in 2001 to the thousands at Woomera in 2002.

The Corporate Connection

While the WTO is made up of nation states, transnational corporations (TNCs) have an enormous impact setting the WTO's agenda. TNCs have two key avenues of power over the WTO. Firstly, TNCs exert immense political and economic pressure onto the most powerful WTO member governments, the US, EU and Japan. Secondly, the interests of corporations and nation states often coincide, with nation states seeking to assist corporations at maximising profits at every possible opportunity. Infact corporations and states most often work hand in glove.

Take GATS for instance. The driving force behind the GATS agreement are powerful multinational corporations, organised into corporate lobby groups, who stand to make big profits from the service liberalisation. European based non-government organisation Corporate Europe Observatory has conducted extensive research into the impact of corporations on the GATS negotiations. In the United States, the US Coalition of Service Industries, started by Citicorp and American Express amongst others, has been pushing for a GATS style agreement since the early 80's. A quote from a former chair Harry Freeman points to their extensive access to key people: "You have working relationships... and you see the USTR (United States Trade Representative) and the Treasury Department and the relationships are good.... We have a fifty page wish list and we meet with our trade negotiators as often as weekly."

In the European Union there is the European Services Forum, and it's high-level European Services Leaders Group. Many ESF proposals have ended up in EU GATS 2000 Negotiating proposals. The Deputy head of the EU Trade Directorate explained the significance of the ESF in 1999: "We are going to rely heavily on the network... We are going to rely on it just as heavily as on member state direct advice in trying to formulate our objectives."

SPOKESCOUNCILS & AFFINITY GROUPS

Affinity Groups / Working Groups.

'Working groups' are groups of people who have come together to work on a particular aspect of a larger action. Working groups are formed for the duration of an event and its preparation to set up the infrastructure for autonomous actions by affinity groups. Different working groups might organise publicity, first aid and legal observers for an action. Affinity group actions might include one affinity group blockading a road while another does street theatre. Affinity groups can be pre-existing groups, or can be formed especially, from people travelling together, locality (e.g. 'Bundoora Liberation Army'), friendships, workplace, and so on. In activism, affinity groups are used to organise events and protests, but they have the potential to be used for ongoing forms of democratic decision making in everyday life.

Affinity groups empower individuals to work with like-minded people, and maximise social and emotional support. Coming together as a collection of affinity groups also means groups who have differing ideas on how to achieve social change can co-operate on the practical needs of making the event happen, without the need to decide on a single viewpoint as a precondition or basis for that co-operation.

The responsibilities of affinity groups are to delegate a 'spoke', and through this person to participate in the spokescouncil.

How can I or my group prepare for the actions against the WTO?

Some questions you might like to ask yourself are: why are you going? What do you hope to achieve through the journey? What are the kind of actions you are prepared to under-take? E.g. Are you prepared to engage in civil disobedience? What actions are you planning or organising to be involved in? How might these actions affect others? What are your fears and anxieties, and are these valid? What are your physical and psychological limitations? Etc., etc., etc. Who will act as 'spokes' for your group at the spokescouncils?

What is a spokescouncil?

A spokescouncil is a meeting for affinity groups to facilitate co-operation over practical needs and to organise actions. At a spokescouncil, each affinity group delegates a 'spoke' to act as spokesperson for that meeting. Often the spokes will form a circle with the rest of their group sitting behind them to feed back information from the affinity group to the larger meeting. (Hence the name. The meetings resemble a bicycle wheel with its spokes.)

Sometimes a quick spokescouncil can be called consisting of the spokes, if it takes place while lots of other things are happening.

Spokescouncil procedure.

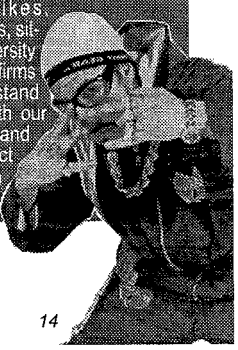
A facilitator is given the responsibility of steering the meeting in accordance with the wishes of those present. This includes establishing the agenda for the meeting, keeping speaking lists, keeping discussion relevant and looking for consensus solutions/arrangements where possible. A typical spokescouncil would involve introductions, followed by reportbacks and announcements of relevant info, the forming of agenda items and decisions needing to be made on them, and end with any final announcements.

[Big] respect for diversity of tactics.

'Respect for diversity of tactics' acknowledges that people will always disagree over what kinds of actions they want to do (because of different ideas about what's effective, different physical abilities, or the means of protest are available, etc), and tries to keep the paths of communication happening between those differences. We can affirm diversity and solidarity without condemnation, even with approaches we would not all use.

'Diversity of tactics' also, therefore, means not falling into the trap of publicly denouncing the approaches of others, especially when it might result in the use of repression and violence against them. 'Diversity of tactics' means enabling people to act while respecting the safety of others as well as solidarity and autonomy. It doesn't mean anything goes.

It means that in seeking to change society a variety of methods are required, and that different people have different means to protest and different ideas about what is most effective; direct actions, teach-ins, civil disobedience, petitions, hunger-strikes, writing, strikes, sit-ins, etc. 'Diversity of tactics' affirms that we stand together-- with our differences and with respect for each other.



Time and time again, the World Trade Organisation has proved it is little more than a tool of global capital, causing and propagating the subordination of the worlds' masses. Sydney, Australia will be hosting a meeting of WTO Trade Ministers from twenty-five select countries to discuss the Doha Round of Multilateral trade negotiations. We will show our defiance against this instrument of global domination by enacting our dissent and articulating our multiple visions for the future.

The current world order relies on creating pockets of human containment and upon the unfettered flow of capital. A significant role of the WTO is to create "trade zones", which works in tandem with the nation-state to keep people within constructed boundaries. Further, organisations such as the WTO, IMF and WB, aided by the colonial masters, forcibly institute structural adjustment programs and austerity measures in the majority world that continue to impoverish millions, cause genocide and war and displace thousands more. Those who bear the brunt of this oppression, resist in the only way they can- by transgressing borders. By calling for the free flow of people across borders and global cultural interaction we challenge the (in)stability of the current economic order.

Those fleeing the misery and devastation wrought by the WTO-sponsored 'development' in the majority world are faced with persecution at the hands of the global elite. When the tyranny of the nation-state is questioned, racist and nationalistic discourses are invoked to buttress the "white-nation". By looking to the self-activity of those most affected, we gain hope to be able to transcend our current stasis and paralysis.

In our eyes, the World Trade Organisation has no legitimacy. This meeting in particular gives credence to our claims that it is through arm-twisting, blackmail and direct coercion, that the worlds' masses are subjugated under the will of capital. We will use our bodies in active, unarmed resistance to rupture the smooth functioning of this body. We will be wearing orange as a symbol of the global state of emergency we are living under. Our choices are simple- capitulation or rediscovering our humanity by creating the future we want.

We invite you to join us.

bust up the borders
ORANGE BLOC
CALL TO ACTION
No Borders Sydney >> Contact: Manoj 0414506913, Annette 0422633065
No One Is Illegal Melbourne>> Contact: Jess 0422 614 839

:: active defiance against the World Trade Organisation ::

RESOURCES

CONTACTS

Melbourne Info

www.s11.org

Car pooling - no2wto rideboard
http://no2wto.nomasters.org

Active Calendar
http://xchange.anarki.net/active

Sydney Info

no wto autonomous network
http://nowto.cat.org.au
Sydney Social Forum
www.sydneysocialforum.org

GATS

Friends of the Earth
http://foe.org.au/gats

GATS Watch
www.gatswatch.org

Anti-capitalism

Peoples' Global Action
www.agp.org

A-Infos – Anarchist News Service
ainfos.ca

Mid-Atlantic Infoshop
http://infoshop.org

Autonomedia
www.slash.autonmedia.org

Zmag
http://www.zmag.org

Reclaim The Streets
http://rts.gn.apc.org/

Anti-Capitalist Convergence (CLAC) Montreal
http://www.tao.ca/~clac/

The Commoner
http://www.commoner.org

Aufheben
www.geocities.com/aufheben2/

Ecology

eco-action
http://www.eco-action.org/

Earth First!
www.earthfirstjournal.org

Groups

For a full list of groups go to http://nowto.cat.org.au/affinity.php

Melbourne

No2WTO network
no2wto@nomasters.org

Melbourne Legal
no2wto-legal@nomasters.org

No-One is Illegal
antimedia.net/nooneisillegal
nooneisillegal@netscape.net
0418 149 387

The A-Team
http://ateam.dolcarmy.org
Ateam@dolcarmy.org

FOE Trade Collective
9419 8700
312, Smith st, Collingwood

Barricade Books & Infoshop
9387 0646
115 Sydney rd, Brunswick

New International Bookshop
Corner Lygon and Victoria st, Carlton

Indymedia
http://indymedia.org
http://melbourne.indymedia.org
http://sydney.indymedia.org

Sydney

Social Centre Autonomous Network (scan)
http://scan.dorja.com/
scan@cat.org.au

1ST AID:
First Aid at the WTO protests? Anyone with first aid or medical training you are needed.
changeupron@hotmail.com
Mobile: 0439 741978

Sydney No Borders
no_borders@graffiti.net
nowto.cat.org.au/orange.php
0414 506 913

Education Bloc
education@nus.asn.au
0413 041 083

Adelaide

Flinders Uni WTO action collective
no_wto@hotmail.com

WTO PROTEST EMAIL LISTS:

1. MELBOURNE announce list:
http://nomasters.org/mailman/listinfo/no2wto-announce
2. MELBOURNE discussion list:
http://nomasters.org/mailman/listinfo/no2wto-network
3. SYDNEY discussion list:
http://lists.cat.org.au/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/nowto

Fun & Cool

WTO parody
www.GATT.org

(Free) music
www.negativland.com
http://bastardpop.co.uk
www.dabox.co.uk
www.dj-shirkhan.de
www.boomselection.net
www.rapstation.com

Culture Jamming
www.subvertise.org
www.adbusters.org
www.obeygiant.com
www.rtmark.com

(Maga)Zines
oompa-lumpen.org
geocities.com/wrestling_ghoul
www.stayfreemagazine.org
http://www.panix.com/~dhenwood/LBO_home.html

Defiant (Misc. stuff)
www.wholiveshere.com
www.realultimatepower.net
flag.blackened.net
www.dolcarmy.org
http://www.guerrillagirls.com
nothingness.org
http://www.appliedautonomy.com

Hacking
www.2600.com
www.phrack.com

Graffiti
http://www.graffiti.org/escapism

GLOSSARY

glos·sa·ry (glôs-r, gls-) A list of often difficult or specialized words with their definitions, often placed at the back of a book.

Affinity group

an affinity group is a group of people that know and trust each other. It is a clique, team, gang, cabal, of people that share similar ideological and practical aims and wish to work together.

Autonomy

A term with wide currency among the opposition to capitalist globalisation -- cf. Italian autonomia, German autonomen, Zapatista autonomismo, and "temporary autonomous zones" (TAZ). Part of the movement away from homogeneity in general ("being in someone else's project", whether state, parent or boss) towards self-activity - of a collective kind, rather than the "independence" of loners or self-made entrepreneurs

Barriers to trade

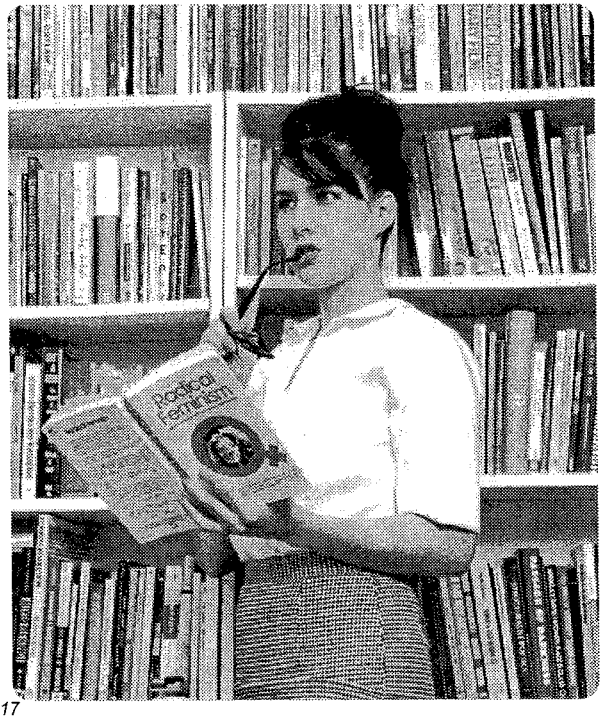
Anything which interferes with the market forces of supply and demand determining prices, wages and the allocation of resources. Tariffs and unequal treatment of different countries are traditionally seen as barriers to trade. Increasingly, anything which impacts on profits, like regulations on the environment and workers' rights, are seen as barriers to trade.

Capitalism

From Latin root capit -- "head"; for connections not merely etymological between capital punishment and the punishment of capital. The economic order that, like its ruling class, will rarely speak its name, preferring the codewords "market", "democracy", and "freedom". Capitalism is organized around the production of commodities by commodities, from which follows the subversion of markets, the annulling of democracy, and the subordination of freedom.

Corporation

From corpus, "body". The body of the Catholic church was the ur-corporation, as the monastery was the prototype for other key institutions in the West -- the asylum, the hospital, the university, the factory. By a legal fiction the business corporation was given a deathless personality -- an idea related to the theory of the "divine right of kings" by which the monarch has two bodies, one that decays, one that doesn't ("The king is dead; long live the king"). The laws of the corporation inversely mirror the laws of criminal conspiracy. When individuals combine in pursuit of capital, they are afforded more protection than they enjoy in their own persons (eg. limits to both civil and criminal liability, special treatment re taxation); when individuals combine against capital, they have less protection than they have on their own - mere association is criminalised.



Direct Action

A mode of politics that tactically -- and for some, strategically -- shortcircuits official channels of "representation", often by interrupting business as usual, and deploying a variety of means, open and clandestine: street manifestations, blockades, trespass, sit-ins, banner hanging, squatting, sabotage, crop-trashing, pie-throwing.

Free trade

Trade where nothing interferes with the market forces of supply and demand determining prices, wages and the allocation of resources. Corporations and individuals who have the ability to exploit the market have the most to gain from free trade. Traditional slogan of imperial monopolists and protectionists. For export only. Involves turning a blind eye to government tax breaks and subsidies to corporations.

GATT

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Founded in 1944 at the Bretton Woods Convention, this pact between the first world nations was the precursor to the WTO. Along with the IMF and World Bank, it began the process of trade liberalisation and corporate globalisation.

GATS

The General Agreement on Trade in Services is a WTO trade agreement. GATS aims to 'liberalise' the service sector such as education, water, postal services etc. This means removing 'barriers to trade' and increasing multinational corporations ability to profit from the service industry through such things as privatisations

Global South

The old West/East division, based on the political geography of the capitalist-communist bloc system, is giving way to North/South terminology, reflecting the post-Cold War configuration of a Northern capitalist core and a Southern periphery, made up of third world countries. The obvious limitations is the fact that capitalism's uneven development creates conditions typically associated with the South inside the Northern heartlands and vice versa. ie billionaires in Indonesia, indigenous people in Australia.

IMF

The International Monetary Fund. An institution set up in 1944 to maintain currency stability and develop world trade by lending money to countries with balance-of-payment problems, after World War II. By putting conditions on loans, the IMF has been able to force Southern ('third world') countries to open their markets.

Neo-liberalism

An ideology which has dominated international relations since the mid-seventies. Among other things, neo-liberalism argues that 'free trade' increases economic efficiency, which in the end benefits everyone. We disagree.

Structural Adjustment Program

Structural Adjustment Programs [SAPs] are the method by which the World Bank and IMF impose economic reforms, measures and policies on debt ridden Southern States, so that they can continue to pay off their debts to western banks. This usually involves the forced privatisation of public utilities such as water and electricity and cuts back in governments spending such as health, welfare and education services. They involve the restructuring of the economy to promote export products, eg. cash crops, to gain hard currency to pay back the loans. The policies are generally in the interests of Northern / wealthy states and corporations and have the effect of compounding and increasing poverty. SAPs have been repackaged as "Poverty Reduction Schemes", but are yet to change their content.

Tariffs

A tax put on imported goods to protect local industries, by making local goods cheaper.

TLA

Three-letter acronym. That's a joke. You're supposed to laugh.

World Bank

Emerged out of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), set up at the Bretton Woods meeting in 1944 to funnel low-interest loans for the rebuilding of war-ravaged Europe, and to head off communism. It later evolved into the prime agency for Third World aid and development. The 1970s saw a massive growth in the World Bank's resources; with the development of "structural adjustment" loans as a vehicle for imposing, as they say, "free-market liberalisation". In recent years, by hiring on some of its milder critics, the World Bank is able to play good cop to the IMF's bad cop.

WTO

World Trade Organization. 1995 successor organization to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). GATT was a system of member-state negotiations ("rounds") concluding in contracts that fixed tariffs in industrial products at national borders. The Uruguay Round ended in 1994 with the establishment of a permanent international bureaucracy, the World Trade Organization (WTO), having a much larger scope that does not stop at borders, and includes agriculture, intellectual property rights, trade in services, and investment measures. It is structured for good of the private tyrannies it serves, capitalist firms.

The WTO is coming to Sydney

14-15 November 2002